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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Network News" focuses on efforts to remedy the dropout problem. The following programs' common goal is not only to retain students through graduation, but to ensure that they acquire the skills necessary to take their place as productive members of society: (1) the Classroom Partners Project, a collaborative effort between Public Television Station WTVS in Detroit, Michigan; and the Detroit Public Schools; (2) Twelve Together, a program of ninth grade support groups in Detroit; (3) the Industrial Arts Work Experience Renovation Project, a work-study pilot program in Jersey City, New Jersey; (4) the ninth grade orientation project in Seattle, Washington; (5) the Urban Middle Schools Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program, a new national demonstration program by the Academy for Educational Development; and (6) the Westside Organization Network, to encourage parent involvement at Sidney Lanier High School in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to those program descriptions, the following articles are also included: (1) an interview with Dr. Arthur Jefferson, general superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools; (2) a summary of difficulties faced in comparing the dropout rates of schools or school districts; (3) a summary of an analysis of the Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP) on the dropout problem among Hispanic students; (4) a discussion of the rural dropout problem; (5) discussion of an initiative to increase attendance and school participation among Appalachian students in Cincinnati, Ohio; and (6) announcement of Excellence in Education Award to John F. Kennedy High School, Bronx, New York. (PS)

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NETWORK NEWS

Urban Principals

Ford Foundation City High School Recognition Program

Autumn 1986

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DROPOUT PREVENTION

The seriousness and extent of the national dropout problem have placed dropout prevention programs among the highest of educational priorities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1984), an estimated 27.4 percent of our nation's students fail to graduate from high school. While this figure is considerably higher in the largest cities and among minorities, the issue is also receiving attention in rural and suburban school districts. The economic ramifications of the rising dropout rate are staggering, with lost tax revenues for high school dropouts ages 25-34 estimated at $71 billion, welfare and unemployment costs at $3 billion, and crime prevention costs at $3 billion (Levin, 1972).

The solution to the dropout problem is not easily forthcoming, and debate among educators, policy makers and concerned citizens about what exactly can or should be done is heating up around the nation. Many national and local studies are concentrating on the dropouts themselves--factors that influence their decision to leave school and initiatives for getting them back--while others focus on strategies and programs to respond to the dropouts.

In the past year there has been a shift in thinking about the dropout problem; the focus has changed from the student to the school. There is now an effort to widen the focus even more--to enable educators and lay persons to see that the dropout problem and its remedies must be the responsibility of the entire community, not just the schools. This issue of the Network News describes efforts at every level--classroom, school, district, and community.

The programs are innovative and are lodged in diverse settings--from large urban environments, such as Detroit, which is highlighted in this issue, to Appalachian communities throughout the south and southeast. The common goal, however, is not only to retain students through graduation, but to ensure that they acquire the skills necessary to take their place as productive members of our society. It is increasingly clear that, for dropout prevention programs to be effective, at-risk students must be identified and programs must be designated to specifically respond to their needs.

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DROPOUT IN DETROIT: THE SUPERINTENDENT'S VIEW

Excerpt from "VISIONS", Detroit Public Schools

General Superintendent Dr. Arthur Jefferson, says he will "restructure" the entire Detroit Public System if that's what it takes to do his part to prevent high school dropouts.

"We take the point of view that we're here to service the needs of students," Jefferson said. "We're not going to throw away those things that we know are in the best interests of our students but we are willing to restructure if that's the way to serve our young people more effectively."

As a Detroit Public Schools graduate, Jefferson is sensitively aware of the 45 percent dropout rate plaguing the school system he administers. Implementation of dropout prevention strategies has become a top priority item on his agenda.

Dr. Jefferson has directed his staff to research, develop and implement innovative programs that should significantly help reduce the dropout rate to no more than 34 percent by 1990. These intensive efforts primarily involve obtaining a holistic understanding of the roots of the dropout phenomenon.

"We've looked at why youngsters say they're dropping out of school, and we found that there are a number of factors involved related to poor academic achievement, poor self-image, and a lack of stimulus from the total environment. Also, an alarming increase in teen pregnancies significantly contributes to the high school dropout rate. Sometimes the students have unpleasant encounters at school, getting into behavioral and academic difficulties; sometimes they don't get the kind of supportive stimulation needed from other aspects of their life, such as home, church, business, the overall community.

"So it finally comes to a point where the youngster says, I've got to try something else. He doesn't see a future for himself in school, so he makes the decision not to continue."

Jefferson added, "Most of us adults would probably make a similar choice if we, too, were confronted with constant failure. If we don't see ourselves making some headway, the normal reaction is to think about making a change."

The high school dropout rate traditionally is higher in urban environments than it is in suburban communities, due to a number of realities that urban youngsters uniquely face.

"We have economic conditions in the urban environment that are not the same as the suburban. Those youngsters come from a much more privileged economic background than many youngsters who reside in urban communities. Most suburban parents are able to support their youngsters in a lot of ways that the schools traditionally never have done.

"Some of their school districts have financial resources that we don't have; therefore, they're able to provide those youngsters with some additional things, such as lower class size, more technology, supplies, and equipment--that we do not have the resources to provide in an urban school district.

"However, we do have some resources that are comparable to our neighbors in the suburban area; we have a cadre of good teachers, administrators and other staff persons. We also have parents who may not have all of the financial resources, but are very much interested in their children's educational progress."

The efforts of the Detroit Public School System to address the dropout problem mainly rely on strategies and resources that involve intensive utilization of various preventive and remedial programs which the General Superintendent summarized.

"In the preventive manner, we want to deal with the issue of catching that potential dropout before he is 16 years old and ready to leave school. So, in our elementary schools, we're trying to make instruction better to help the students succeed academically.

"Our Early Identification Program involves having counselors assigned to all of our elementary schools. That way, someone can interact with young people at an early age to try to identify those that have some manifestations that may lead to trouble later. ——→

"In middle school, we have Early Intervention Development Centers on the east and west sides of town in which we have targeted intensive counseling and academic supports for students identified as having some of the characteristics that predictably will lead to dropping out of school. Those characteristics essentially are academic difficulties, erratic attendance and behavioral problems," Jefferson explained.

Jefferson added that he and his staff have recognized the need to deal with social adjustment issues relating to the problem of high school dropouts. Counselors and other support personnel are developing a "mentor" approach to advise students who have a need for more personalized contact.

In spite of the vast number of programs and strategies that the Detroit Public Schools have--or are soon going to have--in place, the General Superintendent believes that dropout prevention requires a total community effort.

"The problem of students leaving school before completing 12 years is not a school system problem alone. The school system has a role to play--a very important role to play--in the process of dropout prevention; but it is a shared responsibility," Jefferson declared.

There is a way the private sector can help persuade youngsters to stay in school and make the connection between school and work.

"To put it simply, we have to have more jobs for our qualified young people to move into after they complete 12 years of schooling," Jefferson said. "That's the responsibility we have to lay on the private sector--to help us create those meaningful jobs for our young people, and to open the doors so they can see that there is a reward at the end of the high school process."

"The public sector--namely, state and federal governments--also should be full and active partners on our dropout prevention team," Jefferson said.

"I think it's a national tragedy that at a time when urban centers in particular need a lot of rebuilding--both physically and psychologically--that our federal government, representing the strongest nation in the world, is saying it no longer wants to have a definitive role to play in public education.

"We must continue to pressure the government to be of assistance to public schools. They cannot pull out," he said.

Jefferson described the moral decay that can lead to making the self-destructive decision to drop out of high school.

"I think that there has been a fundamental breakdown of values in our society among many of our young people. I don't accept the fact that being poor, or your coming from a one-parent home, gives you a license to do anything you want; to be disrespectful and not apply yourself for your own benefit," he said.

"We're going to have to work hand in hand with our religious institutions to help try to restore the sense of civility and respect that is the backbone of any civilized community."

Parents obviously have a role to play in developing children who are inclined to make the mature decision to complete at least 12 years of formal education.

"The school can support and nurture but generally speaking, youngsters come to us already with a certain set of values and initial attitudes that they get from the home.

"I think we're going to have to continue to reconnect the home with the school in a supportive manner. The most effective strategy for learning to take place is where an individual teacher and the individual parent are working together in the best interests of the child."

Even though he's proud of the intensive efforts being made by the Detroit Public Schools staff to help prevent high school dropouts, Dr. Jefferson said he recognizes that there's much more work to be done. "We shouldn't blame each other all the time; surely there's enough blame to go everyplace."

"I'm not proud that we have numbers like the 45 percent dropout rate, but I feel confident that with the help of the community at large, we're going to try to do better what we know we ought to be doing."

"I am pleased that we are beginning to make an impact," Jefferson said, "but I will not be satisfied until our dropout rate is much, much lower than it is now." ■

DEFINING THE "DROPOUT"

Suzanne DeCamp, Research Associate, AED/School Services Division

Comparing the dropout rates of schools or school districts is difficult and often misleading, because there is no single generally accepted method of computing the dropout rate. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) has conducted several school and district surveys in the past two years, and has found that there are too many different ways of calculating a dropout rate to make any valid comparisons between districts, on the basis of the figures reported.

If a school administrator were asked to define a dropout, the reply would probably be similar to this: "Someone who leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school." This appears to be clear enough, but if six administrators from six different districts were asked to determine the number of dropouts in a single school, each using the method used in his/her own district, they would probably come up with six different numbers.

In most urban school districts, a "withdrawal code" is assigned to each student leaving school, indicating the reason for withdrawal. These codes may include such reasons as: transfer to another school, pregnancy, expulsion, transfer to a correctional institution, overage, entering military service, marriage, work, nonattendance, and death, among others. Certain codes are designated as "dropout codes" and used in determining the official dropout count. There is, however, no consistency among districts as to which reasons constitute dropping out. Military service, entry to a GED program, transfer to a correctional institution and expulsion are areas about which there is particular disagreement.

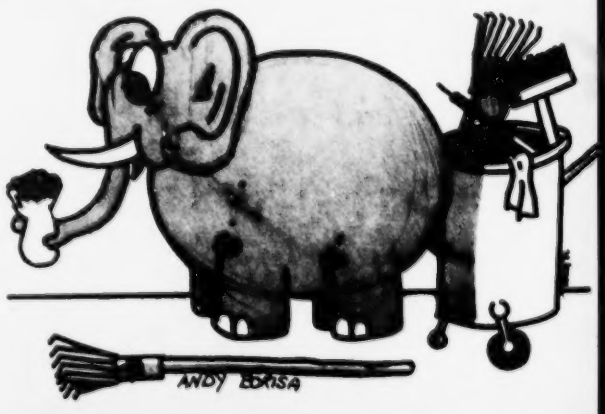
Then there are the students who just disappear without any explanation. Some districts will assume that these students have dropped out unless they have received a request for a transcript from another school. In such cases, students who return to their country of origin may be wrongly counted as dropouts, as a school in Mexico or South America is not likely to write to the United States for a transcript. Other districts will not consider a student a dropout unless they are formally notified to this effect. This could have the effect of excluding from the dropout rate those who simply fail to return from summer vacation.

Some districts will count students of any age or grade as dropouts, if they otherwise fit the defined criteria. Others limit their count to those in the high school grades or those of legal school--leaving age (which might also include kindergarten, since children are not usually required to attend school before the age of 6 or 7).

To obtain the annual dropout rate, most districts divide the number of dropouts, however they may be counted, by the total enrollment. Again, there is much variation among districts. Total enrollment can mean K-12 enrollment or only the upper grades. It can mean September enrollment, June enrollment, average daily attendance, minimum or maximum enrollment, or the total number of different students who were enrolled at some time during the school year. Some districts compute a cohort survival rate, comparing the number of students enrolled in 8th or 9th grade in a given year with the number who actually graduate four or five years later. Usually, but not always, these rates are corrected for transfers, retentions, and other student losses due to reasons other than dropout. Changes in district boundaries or school assignment policies during the period in question would, of course, make a reliable cohort survival rate impossible to obtain.

School administrators, therefore, should not be too elated or discouraged to find that their district's reported dropout rate compares favorably or unfavorably with that of some other district. It is more important to know whether the dropout rate, however it may be calculated, is going up or down, why it is changing, and what can be done to improve it. ■

WHEN YOU DROP OUT OF SCHOOL, YOU WORK FOR PEANUTS



THE MEDIA AND SCHOOLS
A Unique Partnership in Detroit

In an unprecedented partnership, Public Television Station WTVS in Detroit joined hands with the Detroit Public Schools in an ambitious and comprehensive program addressing the serious dropout problem in their city. Their year-long program, begun in mid-March 1986, is intended to increase community and media awareness and reduce dropouts in the future. The project was developed in conjunction with a community outreach task force that includes Detroit Public Schools representatives, a number of prominent Detroit--area educators and community leaders.

The **Classroom Partners Project** will address the dropout issue by producing a series of television programs that will be coupled with the outreach activities of 22 task forces as well as activities in the cooperating schools. An extensive public service announcement campaign is also being used to recruit businesses, corporations and service groups to the Detroit Public Education Fund Adopt-A-School Program.

The television productions of this ambitious program include a prime-time documentary, titled Sidewalk High, aired in March '86, with a televised "town meeting" immediately following; public service announcements, a national teleconference, ongoing public affairs programs focused on the dropout issue, a student--written and performed television drama about the consequences of being a dropout; and finally, a prime-time follow-up program at the end of the project year.

A refreshing aspect of the **Classroom Partners Project** is that it is not just an "expose" of a negative situation, but rather an opportunity to help in the solution of a very serious problem. Step one in solving any problem is to inform people that there is, a problem...and a solution. Because the dropout issue is a community problem this innovative program offers a community solution. Television can help reinforce a can-do attitude in the schools and can alert parents and community leaders to the problem, what solutions the schools are implementing and what community support is necessary for this solution.

The first phase of this program took place in March and was very successful. A gauge of the success was the town meetings that took place after the airing of the documentary, which was produced and written by Trudy Gallant, an award-winning broadcast journalist and graduate of the Detroit Public Schools. The town meetings were held in all 22 city high schools and were linked to the station through open telephone lines and a live studio presentation. Cooperation from the major networks, WXYZ (ABC), WJBK (CBS), and WDIV (NBC), that loaned remote crews, made the technical aspects possible. The meetings were attended by approximately 900 representatives from the community. Task forces in each of the 22 locations were organized and present at their respective school. Each of these task forces was facilitated by the high school principal or his/her designee. Out of this open forum process many recommendations were made to address the problem. Recommendations fell into four major categories: early intervention, curriculum improvement, school/community partnerships, and miscellaneous. Specific recommendations included; early identification and measures for high risk; early remedial support services; increasing counseling services especially for elementary education; more relevant curricula which is success oriented; insuring basic skills learning; expanding vocational education especially at the middle school level; expanding programs on sex education, substance abuse, and with pregnant girls; providing tutoring programs such as peer group and cross-age; involving all sectors of the community including the media; establishing tutoring programs at off-school sites; conducting parenting skills classes; and strengthening home/school support through parent conferences, homework, parent volunteers, parent tutors, phone calls and newsletters.

This challenging project is not yet completed and a final report on its success and failures not yet written, but if the initial reaction and enthusiasm that **Classroom Partners** has generated in Detroit is any indication, it is bound to make an impact on this city's estimated 50% dropout rate. On a national level, similar programs in cities all over the country can be modeled from this example of true commitment and partnership, a partnership not in the public relations sense, but in the altruistic sense. In addressing the positives of dealing with a negative situation, Dr. Kenneth Harris, Director of the Detroit Office of the Michigan Department of Education said, "We are perpetuating an underclass, but unlike so many other epidemics and crises in our society, in Detroit we have the community and business resources which could impact a change. With commitment of business, the community, the courts, police, religious groups, educators and the media, we can reduce the dropout rate significantly." ■

"TWELVE TOGETHER": NINTH-GRADE SUPPORT GROUPS IN DETROIT

In large urban high schools young people often feel lost. They feel no one cares whether they stay or leave, are present or absent.

To counter this sense of abandonment, a program called Twelve Together was started in 1982 by the Metropolitan Detroit Youth Foundation in cooperation with the Detroit Public Schools. Since 1982, 20 groups have been formed each year-one for each Detroit high school. The total number of students involved so far is 960.

The groups meet 30 times during ninth grade for a weekend retreat (1), a parent reception (1), peer group counseling meetings (22), and academic forums (6). The purpose of the program is to demonstrate that promotion and graduation rates will improve for youngsters who are part of a positive, sustained peer support group.

The program begins with a weekend retreat to build group cohesiveness and to offer orientation to the program. Four groups (48 youth) attend the retreat. The Wednesday evening after the retreat there is a parent reception to fully involve the whole family in the program.

The heart of the program is the peer group counseling meetings. They take place weekly in after-School sessions at or near the high school. Many groups have been adopted by businesses who welcome the groups to their offices for meetings and offer other supports and incentives to the groups. The groups are led by two trained adult volunteer advisors. Problems which are identified in the groups range from strictly academic and school-related problems to family and personal problems. The discussion of any problem concludes with agreement on a plan of action to overcome the problem. For example, if tardiness for the first math class is the problem, the solution may include some members walking to school with the member with the problem. One member who does well in math may volunteer to help tutor.

In addition to the 22 peer group meetings, there are six monthly academic forums which provide tutoring and study guidance. Also, about one-fifth of the students receive more intensive tutoring using the Comprehensive Competencies Program developed by the Remediation and Training Institute in Washington, DC.

The program concludes in June with the "MDYF Graduation Ceremony" recognizing the achievements of the students during the year.

Over the first three years, evaluation data reflect significant success. The promotion rate of Twelve Together students in 1984-85 was 16 percentage points higher than the promotion rate for a control group of similar students.

Principal funding has been through the C.S. Mott Foundation and other private donors. It appears that Twelve Together is emerging as a low-cost program that private agencies or school districts may undertake with positive results. There are plans in progress for expansion both within and outside Detroit. ■

For further information, contact Joseph Radelet, MDYF, 11000 W. McNichols, #222, Detroit, MI 48221, (313) 863-9394.

DROPOUT IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

Make Something Happen, a report from the Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP), is one of the first comprehensive analyses of the education of Hispanic youth in America. The National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics, (comprised of 16 members from diverse backgrounds, both Hispanics and non-Hispanics) offers a perspective on Hispanics in the inner-city public high school which they believe is lacking in other reports on school reform. The fundamental conclusion is that "...a shocking proportion of this generation of Hispanic young people is being wasted because their educational needs are neither understood nor met, their high aspirations unrecognized, their promising potential stunted." Dropout rates among Hispanic students are alarmingly high, and the analysis of data generated from interviews, site visits, and a national longitudinal survey "High School and Beyond" revealed:

* The majority of Hispanics enter high school with educational and career aspirations as high as any other group.

* 40% of all Hispanics who leave school do so before reaching 10th grade.

* Dropout rates in the five cities with major concentrations of Hispanics are reported to be as high as: 80% in New York; 70% in Chicago; 50% in Los Angeles, 32% in Miami; and 23% in San Antonio.

* 41% of Hispanic males and 23% of Hispanic females leave school for financial reasons (to accept a job offer and/or to support their families).

* Hispanic students almost unanimously identified "someone caring" as the most important factor in academic success.

Hispanics are the youngest and fastest growing population in the nation; birth and immigration rates indicate that by the year 2000, in key areas of the nation, the majority population will be Hispanic. The low achievement levels and high dropout rates among Hispanic students will have a devastating effect on the future of the social health of these areas. The NCSSH has focused on every aspect of education for Hispanics: language barriers, ethnic misconceptions, segregation, poverty among inner-city youth and families, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, etc. Observations and recommendations include:

* Curriculum changes alone will not solve the problems of minority students at risk.

* Personal attention, contact with adults, and family involvement improve the performance of Hispanic students.

* Schools must adapt and respond to the life situations of students (poverty, segregated neighborhoods, uneducated parents, etc.).

* The representation of Hispanic teachers, administrators and counselors should be a priority.

* High school counselors should establish links with elementary and middle schools so that Hispanic students and their parents are made aware of career options and the academic requirements that relate to them before the students enter high school.

* Hispanics do poorly on standardized tests because they are not studying the material on which they are being tested. They are concentrated in the general and vocational tracks that are not providing them--even if they graduate--with the skills required for the majority of the available entry level jobs.

* Work experience directly affects the performance, retention, higher education and career options, and employability of Hispanic students.

* The federal government's diminished role in offering direct support to school districts has adversely affected low-income students and those who do not speak English. Legislation should be enacted to augment the budgets of inner-city high schools and to establish youth employment programs.

By developing an agenda for action, the Commission is providing both a useful tool and answering the plea of a young Hispanic student "...we work hard and we try and our teachers care, but we are not treated fairly. Our school is poor. If this Commission cares, please make something happen." ■

Copies are Available from, The Hispanic Policy Development Project - 1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, suite 310, Washington D.C. 20036 / $12.50.

"CONSTRUCTIVE" DROPOUT SOLUTIONS IN JERSEY CITY

Tim Knowles, AED/School Services Division

Like many inner city school systems in the country, the one in Jersey City, N.J., has a serious high school dropout problem. 40-45% of its students who begin high school do not graduate, according to the Jersey City School Board figures. "One of the main reasons for the high dropout rate," says Assistant School Superintendent Edna St. Paul, is that students often do not see a relationship between school and the world outside the classroom. To demonstrate to students that there is a relationship, the School Board implemented a work-study pilot program this January, the Industrial Arts Work Experience Renovation Project.

Twenty high school industrial arts students who were having adjustment problems in the classroom enrolled in the program, whose long-term goal was the renovation of a dilapidated Jersey City house fallen prey to burglars and neglect. Students utilized many of the skills learned in morning classes while working five three-hour afternoons each week on the house. For their efforts they were paid an hourly rate of $3.35. "The wage was a real incentive for students," according to Ms. St. Paul, citing the project's good attendance rate. In addition to receiving money for their efforts, students also learned much about the construction trade, including how to install wiring, plumbing, siding, paneling, and sheet rock, as well as how to frame windows, and to plaster.

The work-study program was designed by Industrial Arts experts and others on the School Board who were concerned with finding ways to fight the dropout problem. It was funded through a government grant made available by the Private Industry Council of Hudson County. The Council also provided the house on which the students worked. A shop teacher from a local high school supervised the program at the site, and he was assisted by a New Jersey businessman who is a veteran of the construction business.

During the initial six months of the pilot program students braved the cold and heat while learning lessons about hard work, accuracy, and speed required of workers, in addition to learning trade skills. The students were good workers according to the project's overseers who were especially pleased by their effort and keen desire to learn. After a review of the program near the end of the school year the School Board decided that it was a very worthy one, and they extended its funding through the summer. Ms. St. Paul, who oversees the program, is "confident that approval" for continued funding will be given by the School Board when it meets in August. She hopes to expand the program greatly in the future.

When asked about why they enrolled in the program, students cited a number of reasons, including a desire to gain work experience, earn pocket money, and accomplish something tangible. Some plan to go to work after high school, or into the Army, and others on to college. In almost all cases, however, the program's designers believe they have successfully demonstrated that what is learned inside the classroom can be applied to the world outside of school, and that staying in high school can pay, both in terms of an hourly wage and in more important ways.

Work-study programs have been popular for many years on the college level. They address students' desires to gain work experience before graduation, while at the same being a source of revenue. A work-study program geared toward high school students, such as the one in Jersey City, meets many of those same objectives. More importantly, perhaps, a high school work-study program may act as an incentive for potential dropouts to stay in school, by demonstrating that what's learned in school is valuable outside of the classroom. ■

NINTH-GRADE ORIENTATION REDUCES DROPOUT IN SEATTLE

Chris Kato, Principal, Chief Sealth High School

Statistics of the nationwide dropout rate at the high school level have been compiled for many years and clearly show that anywhere from 20-30% of the entering ninth graders will not graduate four years later. The problem has been escalated by most districts that are converting back to a four-year high school and a middle school configuration. At the 1986 NASSP Convention held in Orlando, Florida, the Academy for Educational Development, funded by the Ford Foundation sponsored a workshop that addressed the concern of "Transition for Students: Middle School to High School" and its participants generally agreed that most dropouts occur at the ninth grade level.

In 1979, Chief Sealth High School in Seattle, Washington, changed from a three-year to a four-year high school. This move created anxiety and concern with all the individuals involved. The high school staff was worried about the adjustment and integration of the ninth graders into the high school setting. The next three years showed a marked increase in the dropout and absenteeism rate. More students seemed to lack good study and work habits, resulting in their inability to cope successfully with the increased number of subject selections and greater freedom in the high school program. Students were also easily influenced by their peers into placing school and learning in less than top priority.

The staff, fully realizing the seriousness of the problem, decide to compile a list of reasons that could contribute to a students'joining the dropout statistics. The results of this survey revealed that ninth graders generally:

1. felt uncomfortable in the setting because they were unfamiliar with the building and were not able to locate the essential offices quickly;

2. had low self-esteem and did not have skills for changing attitudes, emotions, and comfort zones;

3. found it difficult to interact with the Special Education and Bilingual students because of their differences and personal lack of human relations skills;

4. were unaware of the meanings of use, misuse, and abuse of drugs (including such factors as intention, moderation, responsibility);

5. found it difficult not to yield to peer pressure (refusal skills);

6. were unable to evaluate their learning behavior and develop good study skills and study-time schedules;

7. did not possess the techniques and skills necessary when applying for employment and the identification of qualities necessary to continue holding a job;

8. were not knowledgeable of effective communication skills (verbal and written);

9. unsure of the graduation requirements, selection of high school courses, and tentative career options;

10. were unfamiliar with the administration and services offered by each administrative office; not able to identify the rules and school expectations;

11. were not making full use of the library for research and informational reading materials due to lack of library skills.

The Instructional Council, consisting of department heads, support staff, and the administrative team set to work on meeting the above needs and in 1982 set up a semester-long orientation class for all entering ninth graders. The course was titled, "Route 86" denoting the year this particular class would graduate and also the path and direction the freshmen would have to take to find success and involvement at Chief Sealth.

Some schools have orientation meetings before the start of school but, such short exposure to these large concerns is ineffective.

The ninth graders were apportioned into 11 sections with a maximum of 23 students in any one class. Groups were formed to insure balancing by gender and the integration of Special Education and Bilingual students. The rather small classes made contact between the students and the instructor more personal. Using a large auditorium to orient students usually means problems with inattention and a continued unfamiliarity between instructors and students.→

All sections were taught during first period so that the 11 segments could be rotated during the 90-day semester and each class spent an average of eight days in any one unit. The instruction was carried out by a staff that included teachers, the nurse, administrators, counselors and the librarian in the following areas:

Topic Sections / Course Content

1. **Self-concept/Self Awareness:**
   Self-concept materials used. Professionally-made video tapes on motivation, self-talk, modes of learning, health care, screening for vision and hearing.

2. **Drugs/Decision-making:**
   Information on substance use: drugs/alcohol, value clarification, decision-making.

3. **Study Skills/Time Management:**
   Reading techniques, organizing the day, test-taking tips, tools of learning, reading rates, finding out about the teacher, headings, learning styles.

4. **Job Skills/Industrial Arts Electives:**
   Resumes, applications, job interviews, social security cards, I.A. electives.

5. **Multicultural/Human Relations:**
   Multicultural approach, learning student names, stereotyping, understanding group dynamics, conflict resolution, school climate, understanding similarities and learning to be an American.

6. **Home Economics Electives/Communication Skills, Relationships and Responsibilities:**
   Expressing feelings, changing attitudes, learning about home management, family relationships, working together.

7. **Career Planning/Decision-making:**
   Career survey, aptitude tests, transcripts, four-year plan, work experience, electives, exploring the Career Center.

8. **Goal Setting/School Activities:**
   Goal setting, objectives, school involvement, pride in school, evaluating self.

9. **Rules, Regulations, Rights, and Responsibilities:**
   School rules, attendance, behavior, discipline policy, rights and responsibilities, activities.

10. **School Organization and Traditions:**
    Function of Main Offices, duties of administration, the awards and recognition available, learning staff names, identification of staff.

11. **Library Skills and Study Rooms:**
    Good library skills, conduct, Dewey decimal system, reference material, usage of index file, researching skills.

Four years have passed since the inauguration of the ninth grade orientation program under the "Route 86" idea. Sealth is now dealing with the "Route 89" students. The Sealth staff have felt that since the program's inception the students have benefitted by finding themselves comfortable in making the middle school to high school transition. The results show that more students wish to continue their learning through graduation and this is borne out in the statistics. A previous 22-28% dropout rate has now come down to the 12% level. It seems to indicate that the ninth graders do need a well-structured orientation program to set them straight on what high school and education is all about. ■

RURAL DROPOUT
Beyond an Urban Problem

WASHINGTON, D.C.--the Appalachian Regional Commission announced the approval of 12 sites in Appalachian communities that will receive technical assistance from 70001, Ltd., an employment training institute that focuses on the out of school dropout and in-school youth who are potential dropouts. The 12 sites are: Midfield Independent School District, Alabama; Fayette County Schools, Alabama; Bartow County Schools, Georgia; Letcher County Schools, Kentucky; Laurel County Alternative School, Kentucky; Tupelo City Schools, Mississippi; Baldwyn City Schools, Mississippi; Noxubee County Schools, Mississippi; Avery County Schools, North Carolina; Highland County Schools, Ohio; Coffee County Schools, Tennessee; and Mingo County Schools, West Virginia.

The Appalachian Regional Commission, which has a long-standing commitment to education as part of its economic development mission, first sought attention for the problem two years ago, according to Federal Co-Chairman Winifred A. Pizzano. "We commissioned the first comprehensive study ever done on the scope of the problem." The ARC has contributed more than $2 million in matching grants for community-based dropout projects serving almost 30,000 dropouts and potential dropouts.

According to Ms. Pizzano, the school dropout problem is one of the most serious and neglected problems in our society. The costs are enormous: dropouts earn less, produce less, are more likely to be unemployed, pay less taxes and are more than likely to land in jail or on welfare.

The problem has been about the same for the past decade, although no one knows for sure how many children drop out each year," said Pizzano. Some states compare ninth grade enrollment with graduation figures. Others count who has quit, while some count children leaving school in certain years. One thing is for sure, you can't solve the problem by the way we add the numbers." Appalachia, traditionally an area of lower than average educational achievement, has dropout rates in its central and southern areas up to almost 60 percent higher than the national rate. "We have counties where 50 percent or more of the children drop out of school each year. It is not just an urban problem, said Pizzano. Rural areas have been neglected.

To date the ARC has funded projects ranging in approach from remedial education to alternative school programs. Teaming up with 70001, Ltd., is recognition that a much broader effort--one that will achieve community and eventually, national awareness of the problem--is needed.

Together, 70001, Ltd. and ARC are drawing on years of experience in working on education problems. This program is tailored to meet the needs of in-school youth who are potential drop outs. Each of the 12 participating school systems will be offered one or more of the following programs: In-School Career Association, Remedial Education, and/or pre-Employment Training. The In-School Career Association will create a membership organization which enables students to experience belonging, participation, cooperation, and leadership on their own terms. The process involves classroom exploration and inter/intra personal skill development, student planned and implemented affiliation activities, and competitive events in educational, civic, career, and social arenas. Remedial education which involves a competency-based, individualized program on the basics, including life skills such as money management, community resources, and government, will be offered in those school systems desiring to implement such services. Also, the program provides pre-employment training which contains state-of-the-art information needed to track world of work competencies based on 70001's Job-Readiness Curriculum. This program will be offered to seniors preparing to graduate and enter the world of work or to juniors who are seeking part-time employment in order to remain in school.■

CINCINNATI ADDRESSES ITS APPALACHIAN POPULATION

Dr. Lionel H. Brown, Principal, Withrow High School

The dropout problem is an issue challenging urban educators. It has prompted responses on several fronts in this urban high school. The focus of a current initiative is on stemming and eventually reversing the trend of dropouts, specifically in the Appalachian population of this school.

The population: In a total school population of approximately 2,200 (1565 Black; 633 White), 10% are Appalachian, a designation determined by several factors, but primarily by residence in "rural--urban enclaves" identified as Appalachian.

Dropout Prevention: Setting a Positive Tone: Current efforts to increase attendance and school participation by this population must be seen against a backdrop of the whole school plan. The salient hook in the school's overall strategy for success is a strong academic program, defined as "stimulates" in each a dream of him/herself in a productive, viable future, while delivering a competitive classical and practical education. Athletics clubs, social activities, and the discipline system proceed from this fundamental belief system.

Given this belief system, the principal identifies the chief component of current efforts as the establishment of strong ties with the specific community in order to communicate the school's program and the fact that the students are wanted.

The Problem and its Symptoms: Dropout or Pushout: The usual age when students in this population drop out is sixteen; while others, about 1/4 of the Appalachians attending, are withdrawn or "pushed out" at nineteen, often still in the ninth grade. This pattern is an indication of a larger problem, a conflict of cultures, exacerbated by poverty in the Appalachian community.

Transportation: The inadequacy of transportation from "rural-urban enclaves," often near the city center, to the high school ten miles away increases the sense of isolation and alienation and is an obstacle to increasing school attendance. Several responses to this issue were considered:

* A store-front school in the community, staffed by regular school personnel was considered, where students would report when unable to report to the regular school. This is seen as having the advantage of moving the school into "their territory," providing a midway point in a gradual process of assimilation.

* Improving current public transportation was also considered as a means to alleviate the transportation problem.

There was consensus that the school increase outreach activities, on the following proposals:

* Bring community resource people into the school by creating a volunteer program or hiring staff to counsel and do clerical work. Establish parent volunteer program.

* Bring community resource people into the school as speakers, presenters, and entertainers to individual classes and school assemblies.

* Establish outreach program to bring in community members for Open House and parent-teacher meetings. Where transportation impedes this process, the principal suggests "buying transportation".

* Focus on Appalachian culture through the year, e.g. country music concerts, annual square dance, country cooking day in the cafeteria. Educate faculty and staff in Appalachian culture.

* Establish a communications link with community network, i.e, advertise school activities in store-front areas.

* Establish a buddy system where newcomers link up with "big brothers and sisters."

* Recognize achievement through cooperative school-community award, e.g., the community council establish a student-of-the year award for a student at this high school.

In outlining these strategies, the committee recognized the need for a systemic change guided by a dedication to building self-esteem, success, belongingness and ownership in the educational process. It was emphasized that increasing the attendance of this population is a key component in building a value system; the overpowering objective is to enable the student to become a productive life long member of society.■

PREGNANCY PREVENTION AND DROPOUT

Michele Cahill, Program Director of UMSAPPP, AED/School Services Division

Teenage childbearing has negative consequences for young women, young men and society at large. Teenage pregnancy is directly related to school dropout among female students and both teen mothers and teen fathers experience lower educational and occupational status than their counterparts who do not become parents in the school-age years. This connection between school dropout and teenage parenthood has been well documented. Pregnancy remains the most frequently occurring reason young women drop out, and girls who drop out for other reasons are especially at high-risk of an early subsequent pregnancy. Increasingly, attention has begun to focus on middle school, where many adolescents initially make the decision to leave school.

The Academy for Educational Development's Urban's Middle Schools Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program (UMSAPPP) is a new national demonstration program initiated to address this need. Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation, UMSAPPP is providing $70,000-$75,000 grants as well as technical assistance for school systems in nine cities to collaborate with community agencies in the development of programs at the middle school level for adolescent pregnancy prevention. As a preliminary stage to the large grants, AED's School Services' Division conducted a national competition selecting fifteen districts for $5000 planning grants to develop school/community collaborative proposals. Proposals submitted by nine school districts were then selected for project grants. These include: Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Kansas City (Missouri), Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York (Community School District 16), Norfolk, and Oakland.

The foundation of UMSAPPP is the belief that middle schools have a critical role to play in helping young people avoid teenage pregnancy, and that school-based programs are most successful when they are planned and carried out with the participation of local social service, health and youth serving agencies. The program consciously targets early adolescents. While much has been written in the past few years about school improvement, early adolescents have until recently been a neglected group. Yet, early adolescence has become a time when increasing numbers of young people initiate sexual activity. Girls at this age are particularly at-risk of pregnancy since they are unlikely to use contraception, especially during the first months of sexual activity.

In 1984, 125,000 junior high school aged girls experienced a pregnancy. Those most at-risk are young teens who have experienced school failure or retention, and who lack clear options for the future. UMSAPPP has sought to build on the research and reforms of the middle school improvement movement to integrate school improvement efforts with adolescent pregnancy prevention.

The program emphasizes a "life options" approach linking teen pregnancy prevention and other school efforts to improve student skills, self-esteem, career orientation and ability to stay in school. Joy Dryfoos, UMSAPPP Advisory Board Chair and a foremost researcher in adolescent pregnancy prevention, defined "life options" as promoting both the "capacity" and "motivation" of young people to postpone pregnancy. UMSAPPP provides funds and on-going technical assistance for two years for these targeted school districts to develop programs that improve the health, academic and decision-making skills, and self-esteem of adolescents. The UMSAPPP projects are diverse. Middle schools in the nine districts will be involved in a variety of partnerships with agencies in the fields of public health, family and social services, employment, arts and culture and youth services. Program components will include:

* Life planning/decision-making skills curricula
* Family life/sex education curricula
* Staff development/teacher training in sexuality
* Health clinic/nursing services centers
* Service referral guides; staff training in sexuality
* Reaching males curriculum/mentoring
* Parent education/communication programs
* Targeting services to at-risk youth
* Arts, culture, drama programs with sexual responsibility emphasis
* Career emphasis programs
* After-school/resource centers
* Focus group/sexuality and values.

Project organization will also be diverse. The following is a listing of the types of subjects and types of collaborating partners represented by the nine school/community collaborations: ——→

PROGRAM TYPES

Classroom-based
- decision-making skills curricula
- sexuality education curricula
- media programs

Special Programs
- peer counselling
- teen theater
- after-school, recreation
- mentoring for male responsibility

School-wide Interventions
- case management
  (targeting at-risk students
  for varying levels of services)
- health clinics
- professional development in
  sexuality education
- service referral for teachers, guidance counsellors, social workers, coaches
- parent education
- referral system to external social services and family planning

POTENTIAL COLLABORATING PARTNERS
curriculum developers --examples:
Girls Clubs--CHOICES, CHALLENGES
Center for Population Options

Life Planning Education
- youth serving agencies
- family service agencies
- cultural arts groups
- neighborhood centers
- fraternities
- civic groups

examples: "Teen Choice", "WEATOC",
Y.W.C.A. programs,
Alpha Phi Alpha

- public health clinics/hospitals
- family planning agencies
- social service agencies
- family service agencies
- universities

AED's School Services Division will carry out a documentation of project activities at the nine UMSAPPP sites. Activities will focus on project development and on the process of school/community collaboration. The Program is expected to yield data for a report next year on replicable programs for adolescent pregnancy prevention at the middle school level. This information will be disseminated through a national network of school systems and community agencies involved in adolescent pregnancy prevention. ■

PARENTS GET INVOLVED IN SAN ANTONIO

JOSE SALINAS, PRINCIPAL
SIDNEY LANIER HIGH SCHOOL

In 1981 Lanier High School submitted a proposal to the Ford Foundation to increase community involvement, prevent dropouts, and to increase attendance. Lanier High School was the recipient of a $20,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to help attain the goals of this proposal. This started the idea of self-containing potential dropouts with two teachers certified in four content areas of instruction. We managed to find 70 students that were already out of school, brought them back to school and self-contained them with these two teachers. Fifty of these students finally graduated.

Next came the idea of getting our community involved with our school. I figured that since the parents would not attend our PTA meetings that I would attend their meetings. By this I mean organizing barrio groups, housing organizations, etc. (Lanier students live in four housing projects). I invited myself to attend their individual monthly meetings. I found that the parents of my students attended these meetings, thus enabling me to communicate with them.

With the help of one of our parents, our PTA President, I organized an organization named WON (Westside Organization Network) which consisted of all the presidents of the organizations in the westside and directors of social service organizations in our community such as: the Department of Human Resources, United Way Agencies, Coalition of Catholic Churches, a representative from the Police Department, Communities Organized for Public Service, and the principals of the middle and elementary schools that feed into Lanier. We notified the parents of the dates and times of the meetings, requested that they attend these meetings, and bring in concerns involving these agencies.

As a result, I was able to meet the parents and make them aware of our school's progress. I kept them informed about our test results, attendance, dropouts, etc. This made our parents go back to their community and advise the rest of the parents on the importance of school.

To this date many, many more parents attend our PTA meetings and we have more parent-teacher conferences. ■

DROPOUT STATISTICS:

* About one out of every four students enrolled in secondary school, or 750,000 students, drops out before graduation. Dropping out peaks during the junior year when 10 percent of the age group leave school.

* One-third of high school dropouts cite their poor grades as a reason for dropping out and/or that "school was not for me."

* Women cite pregnancy as one major reason for dropping out. 80% of the estimated 400,000 pregnant teens under the age of 17 who carry their pregnancy to full term each year, never finish high school.

* Studies suggest that students from single parent homes are twice as likely to drop out of school as are students living with both parents.

* According to Newsweek, among disadvantaged students, the dropout rate approaches 50 percent.

* Dropouts make up half the inmate populations in local jails. It costs about $30,000 a year to keep an inmate in jail, almost 10 times the price of a year of schooling.

* It is estimated that the 13,000 dropouts from Chicago's public schools in 1982 will cost taxpayers $60 million a year for the next 40 years, or $2.5 billion over their lifetimes.

* In Boston where one survey found that more students dropped out last year than graduated, a corporate-sponsored Boston Plan for Excellence guarantees financial aid to every graduate of a Boston public high school with a C average or better, and promises to give them hiring priority after they graduate from college.

* The NEA has allocated $700,000 for anti-dropout programs this year.

◀ URBAN PRINCIPALS NETWORK NEWS ▶

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BRONX HIGH SCHOOL RECEIVES "EXCELLENCE" AWARD

U.S. Representative, Mario Biaggi (D-Bronx/-Yonkers) proudly announced that John F. Kennedy High School, located in the Bronx, has been selected to receive funding under the "Excellence in Education" program operated by the U.S. Department of Education. The project to be funded is entitled "Kennedy Cares" and focuses efforts on assisting potential dropout students.

Biaggi explained, "This project is designed to help those unmotivated, unfulfilled, and unenthusiastic students who are clearly at risk of dropping out of school before they receive their high school diploma. It is an important opportunity for these students to seize control of their destiny and create their own future.

Biaggi continued, "One of the key ingredients to obtaining employment in our high tech society is education. Without a proper education, a person is all but destined to be a member of the underclass of society. The ability to effectively function in American society depends on how much, and how effective an education you obtain." Kennedy is one out of only 121 individual public schools from across the entire country to receive funding under this program. Their grant totaled $20,000.

Said Biaggi, "Our national dropout rate is approximately 30 percent. For a nation that prides itself on educational excellence, it is a figure that should be unacceptable to all Americans. John F. Kennedy High School has made a serious commitment to addressing this crisis reaching epidemic proportions in New York City, and the nation as a whole. 'Kennedy Cares' challenges every student to learn and to excel in school. It serves as an example to all schools throughout this country." ■

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